

PHD NSWC Public Affairs Office

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Foreign Military Users Conference Provides Benefits to All

As part of a unique relationship between the US Navy and its allies, NAVSEA Port Hueneme Surface Warfare Division is hosting the fourth annual conference for foreign users of the Vertical Launch System (VLS). VLS is the launching system used by US ships in Kosovo to launch Tomahawk missiles against strategic targets.

Twenty-one foreign military delegates representing Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain and Turkey are attending the conference. During the conference each country's representative gives a brief account of recent experiences with the equipment. Attendees then discuss common VLS support operation and maintenance issues including any adaptation they require or would like to propose for their systems.

Workshops are provided on technological advances, which offer guidance in installing, using and maintaining the equipment. Gerald Stutts, conference coordinator and NAVSEA Port Hueneme employee said of the conference, "This is an excellent opportunity to share technology with our allies in a way that allows Port Hueneme to fulfill its mission of producing save, effective and affordable technology. Programs such as this allow both the US Department of Defense and foreign military users to take advantage of economies of scale. Foreign military users are able to use the US Navy's buying power while the US Navy increases the sizes of its purchases, bringing down the purchase price of its equipment."

Stutts explained that the program is actually managed through the State Department and went on to say, "While it is an excellent tool for furthering foreign policy and strengthening the cause of democracy, it also provides assistance for our strategic foreign partners." These customers provide a significant source of funding for NAVSEA Port Hueneme as ten percent of its annual budget is supplied by foreign military sales.

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Past conference attendees have provided positive feedback on the conference, referring to the cost efficiencies it produces and the information they receive from the specialists at NAVSEA Port Hueneme and other participants. "Another advantage of such a program is that it makes it easy to keep an open exchange of information," said Stutts. "And, program participants all get the same information at the same time and they like the open exchange."

Additionally, program participants enjoy coming to this area, according to past conference attendees. Many come from colder climates and they enjoy the weather and the coastal atmosphere, often returning to the same hotels each year. Susan Koehler, of the Embassy Suites Mandalay Beach Resort, which regularly hosts guests who are visiting NAVSEA Port Hueneme, says, "We enjoy having the opportunity to be of service to such visitors. Conferences like this benefit the community as a whole in the sense that they provide visitors to the area who spend their per diem dollars." Another positive aspect of hosting these visitors is that a positive experience now will bring return visitors and welcome tourist dollars in the future.

Located at the Naval Construction Battalion Center, NAVSEA Port Hueneme, a component of the Naval Sea Systems Command, is the Navy's premier in-service engineering and logistics center and has been in existence for 36 years. The Division provides test and evaluation, in-service (cradle-to-grave) engineering, and integrated logistics support for weapon systems installed in the United States Navy fleet, United States Coast Guard fleet and many foreign Navy fleets.

For more information, contact the NAVSEA Port Hueneme Public Affairs Office at (805) 228-6150.

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